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ABSTRACT

Aristotle's "Rhetoric" is divided into three books which describe the stages of preparing a public address. Book One establishes the philosophical position of rhetoric to logic. It also establishes four purposes of rhetoric and discusses three types of proof. Aristotle defines rhetoric as a faculty for providing two modes of argumentation: paradeigma and enthymeme; he also delineates the types of rhetorical situations as deliberative, epideictic, and forensic. Book Two of the "Rhetoric" deals with the audience. Aristotle felt that audiences would react positively to a speaker who possessed the qualities of wisdom, virtue, and goodwill. He viewed the audience as a study of human emotions and attitudes. Book Three of the "Rhetoric" is an examination of speech composition. After a discussion of the delivery, Aristotle directs attention to the study of style. He discusses clarity, diction, and metaphor and draws distinctions between the various style forms. The limitations of Aristotelian theory become more apparent as contemporary society becomes more complex and varied. In order to meet the demands of a changing society, some Aristotelian theories have been reconstructed. (MG)

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PUBLIC SPEAKING PRACTICES: ANALYSIS OF ARISTOTLE'S RHETORIC

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PUBLIC SPEAKING PRACTICES: ANALYSIS OF ARISTOTLE'S RHETORIC

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During the fourth century B.C. Aristotle produced The Rhetoric. This publication provides numerous contributions to the study of persuasion. Aristotle uses a systematic approach in The Rhetoric. Other rhetoricians of this time period wrote "how to" handbooks describing oratory. Aristotle preferred a methodological study into the phenomena of rhetoric. "Crem notes that Aristotle's treatise is unique, in that it is a properly scientific consideration of the subject."[1]

The Rhetoric is divided into three books which describe the stages of preparing a public address. I will discuss some of the principles relevant to persuasion.

Book One

Book One of The Rhetoric establishes the philosophical position of rhetoric to logic. "Rhetoric is the counterpart of dialectic."[2] Rhetoric deals with moral matters while dialectic deals with speculative considerations. Rhetoric adjusts to the common citizen,

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[1]Keith V. Erickson, Aristotle: The Classical Heritage of Rhetoric, New Jersey: 1974, p. 2.

[2]Erickson, p. 2.

while dialectic reaches only a selected audience of logically trained minds. Rhetoric uses syllogisms and enthymemes, while dialecticians use induction.

Book One establishes four purposes of rhetoric. First, if a person who is true and just falls prey to his opposite, a rhetorician (through the use of effective discourse) can straighten out the imbalance. Second, since science deals with matters which are hard for the masses to comprehend, rhetoric steps in to facilitate learning (through the use of generally accepted principles). Third, by attempting to prove true statements the rhetorician can counteract false arguments. Fourth, rhetoric functions as a form of self defense:

> It would be absurd if it were considered disgraceful not to be able to defend oneself with the help of the body, but not disgraceful as far as speech is concerned, whose use is more characteristic of man than that of the body.[3]

As mentioned earlier, Aristotle described rhetoric as the discovering of all the means of persuasion. This is the function of rhetoric. Persuasion is achieved through the use of proofs. Proofs are either artistic or inartistic. Artistic proofs are arguments from probability. An artistic proof stems from a speaker's ability to discover lines of argument from a pool of accepted opinions. Inartistic proofs are direct evidence. Inartistic proofs include testimony, contracts, and

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[3]Erickson, p. 3.

witnesses. Both artistic and inartistic proofs are members of the Aristotelian invention process because both must be molded into actual discourse.

Aristotle discusses three types of proof: ethos, pathos, and logos. Ethos is a person's perceived moral character or credibility. Pathos is the arousal of emotion that lies in the listener. Logos is a logical, rhetorical argument within the structure of the speech.

Aristotle defines rhetoric as a faculty for providing two modes of argumentation. The first mode is titled, paradeigma. This is an inductive argument that supplies probable conclusions to the subjects discussed. The second mode is titled, enthymeme. This is a deductive rhetorical syllogism.

The enthymeme takes its materials from the topoi. Topoi is the seat or place of an argument. According to Brake they are "areas or locales in which ideas are grouped according to their kinds and from which they can be drawn."[4] Topoi are of two types. The first is titled, kinoi and is concerned with general principles of probability that apply equally (are common) to all disciplines. The second type, eide is employed when topoi of a common nature fail to apply to the argumentation. Brake stated that "the special topoi embrace substantive items or propositions found largely

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[4]Robert J. Brake, "A Reconsideration of Aristotle's Conception of Topics," Central States Speech Journal, 1965, p. 107.

in the area of ethics and politics and furnish the premises for enthymemes."[5] Aristotle felt that people rely more on specific than common topoi.

Aristotle delineates the types of rhetorical situations. The first type is deliberative. This type of speaking occurs in public assemblies and gathering places. The orator speaks of events and circumstances to come in the future. The speaker demands a course of action and speaks of the good and the bad. Deliberate oratory is pragmatic and requires the orator to adjust his speech to current events and ideas. Aristotle indicated that some of the topics in deliberative oratory include: offspring, honor, strength, beauty, friendship, fortune, etc.

The second form of oratory is epideictic. This is a ceremonial oration which deals with the praising of existing conditions. This type of oratory deals with the present and addresses itself to ethical and moral considerations. "He will . . . speak of virtue and vice, of the noble and disgraceful, since they constitute the aim of one who praises and of one who blames."[6]

The third form of oratory is forensic. Forensic oratory is used in the courtroom and can be either accusatory or defensive. Aristotle examines the motives

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[5]Brake, p. 108.

[6]Erickson, p. 4.

of the criminal character as special topoi. According to Baldwin there are shortcomings to Aristotle's discussion of forensic, "his divisions of extrinsic proofs is for the modern lawyer neither scientific or sgnificant."[7]

Book Two

Book Two of The Rhetoric deals with the audience. Aristotle felt that audiences would react positively to a speaker who possesses the qualities of wisdom, virtue, and goodwill. Aristotle viewed the audience as a study of human emotions and attitudes. Emotion is defined as "all those feelings that so change men as to affect their judgments, and that are also attended by pain or pleasure."[8]

Aristotle analyzed the emotions and their opposites with several applications to rhetorical discourse. He concludes with an example:

> Clearly the orator will have to speak so as to bring his hearers into a frame of mind that will dispose them to anger, and to represent his adversaries as open to such charges and possessed of such qualities as do make people angry.[9]

Aristotle spent some time discussing common rhetorical arguments--example and enthymeme. Example is divided into fables and illustrative parallels.

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[7]Charles S. Baldwin, Ancient Rhetoric and Poetic, New York: Macmillan and Company, 1924, p. 12.

[8]Erickson, p. 4. [9]Erickson, p. 4.

Aristotle advises about the importance of using the enthymeme as supplementary evidence:

> if we can argue by enthymeme, we should use our examples as subsequent supplementary evidence. They should not precede the enthymemes; that will give the argument an inductive air which only rarely suits the conditions of speech-making.[10]

Aristotle divides enthymemes into two groups--demonstrative and refutative. "The demonstrative enthymeme draws conclusions from admitted premises, the refutative draws conclusions disputed by the adversary."[11] Enthymemes are based on four types of facts: probabilities, examples, infallable signs, and fallable signs.

Book Three

Book Three of The Rhetoric is an examination of speech composition. This book is considered by some scholars as spurious. Aristotle analyzed delivery, but failed to recognize its importance, "rightly considered it is thought vulgar."[12] He felt that delivery needed attention because of the sorry nature of audiences. Aristotle emphasizes the need for correct volume and rhythm in speech delivery.

After the discussion of delivery, Aristotle directs attention to the study of style. There are many

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[10]Erickson, p. 5.

[11]Erickson, p. 5.

[12]Erickson, p. 6.

virtues in style, principally clarity. Clarity is achieved by employing nouns and verbs as they are conventially found. Ornamentation is the judicious use of metaphors. Aristotle discusses the vice of excessiveness. With reference to sentences and clauses, Aristotle mentions the virtue of appropriateness, which is achieved through the expression of emotion and character. Appropriateness makes one's case appear more credible.

The form of diction is developed by Aristotle. He felt that rhythm is an important consideration. "The orator is warned to avoid meter lest his speech ring of poetry; and in equal measure, rhythm should avoid excess."[13] Aristotle supports the use of paean rhythm in persuasive speaking because of its non-metrical, yet rhythmical structure.

Aristotle also discusses the metaphor. He felt that metaphors give life and action to a speech. He also felt that metaphors should be obvious and deal with appropriate subjects. Distinctions are drawn between the various style forms. Aristotle felt that the style best suited for prose ill-suited for the rhetorician. He also pointed out that written speeches may fall short when spoken aloud. "Speeches suited for delivery, when delivery is absent, do not fulfill their proper function and appear silly."[14]

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[13]Erickson, p. 6. [14]Erickson, p. 7.

Aristotle discussed the four components of a speech--introductions, proposition, proof, and epilogue. Aristotelian Theory has its limitations. The limitations become more apparent as contemporary society becomes more complex and varied. In order to meet the demands of a changing society, some Aristotelian Theories have been restructured. The writer closes with one of Aristotle's favorite conclusions: "I have spoken; you have heard; you know the facts; now give your decision."[15]

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[15]Erickson, p. 7.